

Look! Listen! - And Overcome!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

"The Lord Knows His Own"

Lord's Day Morning

April 20, 2008

Pastor Jeff Crippen

Sermon Text: Revelation 7:1-8

Introduction

Each one of us received an assignment last week. Have you completed it? It really is a continuing assignment –

List the difficulties, trials, griefs, burdens, pains that the Lord has sent your way. Also include in the list things which you would have chosen but which the Lord has withheld from you. And then, one-by-one, item-by-item, thank Christ for them all.

NKJ John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

This is why it is vital that we understand the times in which we live. We are not in some relatively care-free era awaiting a great tribulation. We are already in the tribulation. Jesus said it. Call it the Great Tribulation or just tribulation – *Jesus told us plainly that as long as we live in this world we are going to have tribulation.* The difference for us is that as Christians these trials are meant for and worked to our good. For the unregenerate, they are judgment. They work thanksgiving and peace in God's people, blasphemy and cursing in His enemies.

Do you recall that last time we also made mention of *the victory of FAITH?* The Revelation repeats it by using the term *overcome*. Christ's people are called to be overcomers -

NKJ Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." "

NKJ Revelation 2:11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." '

NKJ Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*." '

NKJ Revelation 2:26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations --

NKJ Revelation 3:5 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

NKJ Revelation 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

NKJ Revelation 3:21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

NKJ Revelation 11:7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

NKJ Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

NKJ Revelation 17:14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and FAITHful."

NKJ Revelation 21:7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Now, how do we overcome – how do we get this victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil? Well, first of all we must be *in Christ* because He is the One who has overcome the foe –

NKJ John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

But then, there must be this daily overcoming. In this world we are going to have tribulation and trials and grief. How are we to persevere to the end? Listen to John tell us in his First Epistle –

NKJ 1 John 2:14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

NKJ 1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- **our FAITH**. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

There it is – *our FAITH*. The Word of God abiding in us. Believing Who Christ is and all that Christ has said. FAITH, FAITH, FAITH. Here is the victory. This is perhaps THE most fundamental and vital lessons for the Christian to learn – and how hard, hard, hard it is to learn! YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE CHRIST IN ALL

THINGS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. It is repeated over and over for us in Hebrews 11. Let's read the whole thing –

NKJ Hebrews 11:1 Now FAITH is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

3 By FAITH we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

4 By FAITH Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

5 By FAITH Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without FAITH *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

7 By FAITH Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to FAITH.

8 By FAITH Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By FAITH he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

11 By FAITH Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him FAITHful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude -- innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

13 These all died in FAITH, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

17 By FAITH Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By FAITH Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By FAITH Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

22 By FAITH Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23 By FAITH Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

24 By FAITH Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

27 By FAITH he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

28 By FAITH he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By FAITH they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, whereas the Egyptians, attempting *to do* so, were drowned.

30 By FAITH the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

31 By FAITH the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets:

33 who through FAITH -
subdued kingdoms,
worked righteousness,
obtained promises,
stopped the mouths of lions,
34 quenched the violence of fire,
escaped the edge of the sword,
out of weakness were made strong,
became valiant in battle,
turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented --

38 of whom the world was not worthy.

They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through FAITH, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Now – think this through very, very carefully. *WHAT KIND OF CIRCUMSTANCES IS HEBREWS 11 DESCRIBING IN WHICH THESE SAINTS BELIEVED THE LORD??* Let's re-state the question – *IS THERE EVEN ONE SINGLE CIRCUMSTANCE IN THIS WHOLE CHAPTER THAT IS NOT A TRIAL OR TRIBULATION OR GRIEF???*

- Abel hated by Cain
- Enoch in a godless era

- Noah in the judgment of the flood surrounded by evil men
- Abraham called to sacrifice his only son
- Moses pursued by Pharaoh
- Etc, etc, etc.

Faith is NOTHING unless it is called for in a time of trial, in a time of not seeing the goodness or blessing.

Faith comes in when Daniel is in the lions' den. When a mother's child has died. When chains and whippings and imprisonment come. When EVERYTHING is taken from us for the sake of our testimony of Christ. There is only one single way we are going to overcome the enemy in those trials – FAITH! We have to believe Christ.

Faith does NOT really come into play except in times of trial – in times of non-seeingness. Think about it. You get that new job you wanted, that great salary. You have children and they are all healthy and have great attitudes. You have perfect health. You are popular with friends. Does this really make much sense in such times –

“Trust the Lord, believe His Word, and you will get through all this.”

Of course not. (Though if we are wise, we will recognize that we had better be exercising faith in the Lord in those

times as well. After all, what do we have that we have not received from Him?).

No. Fundamentally, FAITH comes into play when we cannot see or feel or understand God's goodness in our circumstances. *Faith is not according to sight* –

NKJ 2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

And this is why we have all these admonitions in the Scriptures in respect to tribulation and trial and difficulty in the Christian's life - and why it is that if we will BELIEVE God's Word and His promises to us in those trials – WE WILL OVERCOME and emerge as conquerors.

NKJ Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

NKJ James 1:4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in FAITH, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

NKJ Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

NKJ 2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

How are we ever to patiently go through such trials *unless we believe what God has said about them and about His purpose for us in them?* The victory of faith, you see.

This is the point at which Demas failed –

NKJ 2 Timothy 4:9 Be diligent to come to me quickly; 10 for Demas

has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica.....

Demas lost the sight of faith. He began to see only this present world. And then he walked away.

Faith as Patient Endurance in Trial

Notice in James 1:4ff, the connection with faith of this matter of PATIENCE. Patience is a kind of synonym for *faith*. Notice the same thing in the following Scriptures –

NKJ 1 Thessalonians 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of FAITH, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

NKJ James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the

Lord, **as an example of suffering and patience**. 11 Indeed we count them **blessed who endure**. You have heard of **the perseverance of Job** and seen the end *intended by the Lord* -- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

NKJ Psalm 37:7 **Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him**; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret -- *it only causes harm*.

NKJ Habakkuk 2:3 For the vision *is yet for an appointed time*; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. **Though it tarries, wait for it**; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 " Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

NKJ Matthew 10:22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures to the end** will be saved.

NKJ Galatians 6:9 And **let us not grow weary** while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we **do not lose heart**. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Isn't it true? We can act pretty haughty in the easy times and fancy that -- well, just like Peter -- *we would never deny Christ, our faith would never fail us*. And then the Lord sends the trial and suddenly we find perhaps that our faith wasn't so unassailable after all, and we are humbled -- and we emerge from the test stronger. But you see that there is only one way to pass the test, to overcome, to conquer. It is the victory of faith. Patient endurance in trial. Patient *waiting* for the Lord to come and fully and finally fulfill every promise. Not seeing, yet waiting. Fixing the eyes of faith on Christ, though our natural eyes cannot see Him.

And we say again, this all happens in the context of suffering, of trial, of persecution, of loss, of self-crucifixion. In the easy times, well, what we might call faith may not be faith at all.

Here is how the hymn-writer put it --

Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers, rise.
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below
Let all our strength be hurled.
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world.

Faith is the victory! Faith is the
victory!
O glorious victory, that overcomes the
world.

His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God.
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith, they like a whirlwind's
breath,
Swept on o'er every field.
The faith by which they conquered
death
Is still our shining shield.

On every hand the foe we find
Drawn up in dread array.
Let tents of ease be left behind,
And onward to the fray.
Salvation's helmet on each head,
With truth all girt about,
The earth shall tremble 'neath our
tread,
And echo with our shout.

To him that overcomes the foe,
White raiment shall be giv'n.
Before the angels he shall know
His name confessed in Heav'n.
Then onward from the hill of light,
Our hearts with love aflame,
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night,
In Jesus' conqu'ring Name.

The Lord Knows His Own

Do you see the connection? In this era of tribulation for the Christian in this world, in an age when the world and the devil are set against Christ so that Christ's people are still hated and killed, and in this age when Christ has ridden forth as a conquering King, sending out His judgments of war, famine, pestilence – *de-creation* – as we have seen - *how can we trust Him that He knows His own? That somehow we will endure and persevere and be brought safely home?* Well, here is His assurance –

NKJ 2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

He knows us and we know we are His because we depart from iniquity and trust Him. And this is the very thing that we are coming to here in The Revelation – *Christ's sealing of His own people in this tribulation age.*

NKJ Revelation 7:1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east,

having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed: 5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed; 6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed; 7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed; 8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand *were* sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand *were* sealed.

Next time we will examine this passage in more detail and see that it is not talking about a literal 12,000 from the literal 12 tribes of Israel, but of the entire Church. That will require more time than we have left this morning.

But this much we can see for our purposes today-

When trials and troubles and griefs come our way, we need never fear that the Lion-Lamb King has made some mistake! He sends His judging angels to harm the earth and sea and trees in judgment of the 'earth-dwellers,' but none of His people will ever be touched in judgment or condemnation from Him.

And the victorious Church in heaven knows this full well so that their response to all of this is –

NKJ Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

See it? Heaven is looking on from heaven's perspective. Heaven sees.

And heaven's response is to worship. Including our fellow believers who have come out of the tribulation –

NKJ Revelation 7:13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Think of this! These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation! What does that mean? How does a Christian *come out of the great tribulation*? By death. And the context here indicates that in many cases it was a death of martyrdom. They had all suffered. But you can see – now that they are with Christ and they *see* – that they have nothing but praise for Christ. No grumbling. No

complaints. Only praise. The far-exceeding weight of glory really will outweigh any momentary light afflictions we experience for now. And further, they understand as we will understand that all the trials really were for their good and Christ's glory. All of them. Every one of them.

So we *really can* give thanks in ALL things. All things. From our hearts. We do it now by faith until the day when we too come out of the tribulation and see Him – and then seeing, worship and praise and thank as we never have before.